

Calendar No. 653

109TH CONGRESS }
2nd Session }

SENATE

{ REPORT
{ 109-356

NATIONAL INTEGRATED DROUGHT
INFORMATION SYSTEM ACT OF 2006

R E P O R T

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND
TRANSPORTATION

ON

S. 2751



SEPTEMBER 29, 2006.—Ordered to be printed

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SENATE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION

ONE HUNDRED NINTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

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Mr. STEVENS, from the Committee on Commerce, Science, and
Transportation, submitted the following

REPORT

[To accompany S. 2751]

The Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation, to which was referred the bill (S. 2751) to strengthen the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's drought monitoring and forecasting capabilities, having considered the same, reports favorably thereon without amendment and recommends that the bill do pass.

PURPOSE OF THE BILL

The purpose of S. 2751, is to create an effective drought early warning system, coordinate Federal drought research, build upon existing drought, weather, and climate monitoring and assessment programs and be incorporated into the Global Earth Observing System of System.

BACKGROUND AND NEEDS

Droughts are a regular and historical phenomena that have impacted various regions of the United States throughout history. They are a normal part of climate. According to the glossary of meteorology, a drought is defined as "a period of abnormally dry weather sufficiently prolonged for the lack of water to cause serious hydrologic imbalance in the affected area." Put simply, a drought is a period of long-term dry weather that persists long enough to cause significant problems such as crop damage, water supply shortages, and fire risks. Deficiencies in precipitation may include reduced rain or snow levels (compared to climate norms) but may

also be aggravated by such factors as wind, temperature, relative humidity, and cloud cover.

The severity of the drought depends upon how little rain falls/snow melts, the duration of the lack of rain/snow melt, and the size of the affected area. Droughts are primarily broken down into four categories: meteorological, where there is less rain than usual; agricultural, where the amount of moisture in the soil no longer meets the needs of a particular crop; hydrological, where surface and sub-surface water supplies are below normal; and socioeconomic where physical water shortages begin to affect the population at large.

SUMMARY OF PROVISIONS

The bill would direct the Undersecretary for Oceans and Atmosphere to establish a National Integrated Drought Information System within the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Agency (NOAA). The bill states that the system shall provide an effective early warning system that shall allow for “usable, reliable, and timely drought forecasts” that shall be communicated to all stakeholders and shall be transmitted in real time when possible. The bill also would instruct the Undersecretary for Oceans and Atmosphere to work with other Federal agencies and to coordinate with Federal, State, local and tribal governments, research institutions and the private sector.

Existing efforts by Federal, State, and other entities provide a broad base of monitoring and assessment information on which the National Integrated Drought Information System (NIDIS) can be built. The Committee expects NOAA to coordinate the activities of NIDIS with existing established monitoring, assessment, and prediction programs with relevance to drought, such as: the National Drought Mitigation Center at the University of Nebraska, NOAA’s Regional Climate Centers and Regional Integrated Sciences and Assessments program, and university-based programs with expertise in climatic, mesonet, or drought-related issues, including NOAA’s regional and State partnerships and Cooperative Institutes.

The legislation would authorize \$8 million in fiscal year (FY) 2007, \$9 million in FY 2008, \$10 million in FY 2009 and FY 2010 and \$11 million in FY 2011 and FY 2012.

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY

National Integrated Drought Information System Act of 2006 (S. 2751) was introduced by Senator Ben Nelson on May 4, 2006, and referred to the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation. On July 19, 2006, the Committee considered the bill in an open Executive Session. The Committee, without objection, adopted the bill and ordered S. 2751 be reported.

ESTIMATED COSTS

In compliance with subsection (a)(3) of paragraph 11 of rule XXVI of the Standing Rules of the Senate, the Committee states that, in its opinion, it is necessary to dispense with the requirements of paragraphs (1) and (2) of that subsection in order to expedite the business of the Senate.

REGULATORY IMPACT STATEMENT

In accordance with paragraph 11(b) of rule XXVI of the Standing Rules of the Senate, the Committee provides the following evaluation of the regulatory impact of the legislation, as reported:

NUMBER OF PERSONS COVERED

The bill does not authorize any new regulations and therefore will not subject any individuals or businesses to new regulations.

ECONOMIC IMPACT

S. 2751 would authorize \$8 million in FY 2007, \$9 million in FY 2008, \$10 million in FY 2009 and FY 2010 and \$11 million for each of FY 2011 and FY 2012 in appropriations to Secretary of Commerce for use by the Undersecretary for Oceans and Atmosphere. These funding levels are not expected to have an inflationary impact on the nation's economy.

PRIVACY

The reported bill would have little, if any, impact on the personal privacy of U.S. citizens.

PAPERWORK

The reported bill should not significantly increase paperwork requirements for individuals and businesses.

SECTION-BY-SECTION ANALYSIS

Section 1. Short title.

Section 1 would establish the short title of the bill as the "National Integrated Drought Information System Act of 2006."

Section 2. NOAA program to monitor and forecast droughts.

Section 2 would establish a National Integrated Drought Information System within the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

The section would require that the system shall provide an effective early warning system that shall allow for "usable, reliable, and timely drought forecasts" that shall be communicated to all stakeholders and shall be transmitted in real time when possible. The section also would require the system to communicate drought information to policymakers at all levels of government and to the public and the private sector. The section also would require that other Federal agencies cooperate with the Undersecretary. Finally, the section would provide a definition of drought.

Section 3. Authorization of appropriations.

Section 3 would authorize \$8 million in FY 2007, \$9 million in FY 2008, \$10 million in FY 2009 and FY 2010 and \$11 million in FY 2011 and FY 2012 in appropriations to Secretary of Commerce for use by the Undersecretary for Oceans and Atmosphere.

CHANGES IN EXISTING LAW

In compliance with paragraph 12 of rule XXVI of the Standing Rules of the Senate, the Committee states that the bill as reported would make no change to existing law.

